

# GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE SITE AS A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE: RECOGNIZING CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCE VALUES

Gettysburg National Military Park is composed of historic and designed landscapes that are nationally significant and contribute to the story of the battle of Gettysburg and its consequences. These landscapes include the battlefield, which is superimposed by commemorative avenues and monuments, and the Soldiers' National Cemetery. The park and the cemetery are listed as two districts on the National Register of Historic Places, with commemorative features of the battlefield listed as part of the park district. The park has also prepared a draft National Historic Landmark nomination for the battlefield and the cemetery.

The hills and ridges, roads, buildings, fences, woodlots, and orchard of the 1863 battlefield landscape were the settings and often the contributing factors that helped determine the battle tactics, the movements and positions of the armies, and the outcome of the battle. Natural processes have resulted in changes in many of the features over the past 135 years. As an example, areas that were thickets have grown into mature woodlands, and open agricultural fields into mature forest.

William Saunders designed the Soldiers' National Cemetery to represent both the equal sacrifice of those who died in battle, and the equality of the states they came from. The cemetery has been altered over time with the addition of graves of veterans of later wars in newer parts of the cemetery, and changes to accommodate modern maintenance methods.

The avenues and monuments of the commemorative park overlie the battlefield, and mark the lines of battle of the Union and Confederate troops. Although many small-scale elements, such as commemorative fencing, are gone, the major structural elements—the avenues and monuments—remain today.

The park has 148 historic buildings, including barns, farmhouses, and outbuildings, and roughly 2,500 individual structures, such as monuments, markers, gravestones, and stone walls, that reflect its history and contribute to its national significance. The park also contains archaeological resources representing both prehistoric and historic periods.

At Gettysburg, the cultural and natural landscapes are strongly intertwined. Many of the geologic features of the landscape influenced troop movements and strategies. During the progress of the battle, both armies positioned themselves on ridgetops. Large boulders provided concealment; in many areas, soldiers were unable to entrench themselves because of the shallow soil. Most of the original forest that covered Gettysburg was cleared for agriculture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and roughly 35 percent of the park is still in agriculture today through an agricultural leasing program. There are no federally listed rare or endangered flora or fauna species known to be present within the park, but the park is in the historic range of the bog turtle, which was recently listed as threatened. The Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory lists 16 species of flora and fauna within the park boundaries that are considered to be threatened, endangered, or species of special concern.

## **BACKGROUND**

Gettysburg National Military Park is nationally significant as the site of the Civil War Battle of Gettysburg, the Soldiers' National Cemetery, and the commemoration and preservation of the battleground. The battle was the largest and most costly in human terms to occur on the North American continent. It lessened the Confederacy's ability to successfully wage war and contributed to the ultimate preservation of the United States. The creation of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, and Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, heightened Americans' sense of the meaning and importance of the war. Inspired by those who experienced the Civil War, the park preserves major features of the 1863 battlefield and commemorates the valor and sacrifice of participants. These elements make Gettysburg a place where Americans continue to remember and honor those whose struggle led to a united nation.

First preserved by local citizens almost immediately following the battle, portions of the Gettysburg battlefield were then protected by the state of Pennsylvania. A federal park was established in 1895 and administered by the War Department, and a three-member commission was appointed by the U.S. Congress. Prior to 1895, only Union accomplishments were commemorated; after federal ownership began, Confederate achievements were commemorated as well. The National Park Service assumed management in 1933. New legislation in 1990 added 1,794 acres to the park's authorized boundary, increasing its total size by one-third, to 5,989 acres. Unlike the original acreage, this new land is under private, not federal, ownership and management. The National Park Service is acquiring interests in the properties comprising the new addition and developing a framework for their management. Park staff are working cooperatively with local communities to protect the historic setting of the park.

The legislated purpose of Gettysburg National Military Park, stated as part of the 1993 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) process, is, in part:

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- to preserve the topographical, natural, and cultural features that were significant to the outcome of the battle;
- to mark the lines of battle and preserve the monuments and markers that commemorate the struggle; and
- to provide opportunities for people to learn about the Battle of Gettysburg in the full social, political, and cultural context of the Civil War and American history.

## **THE ISSUE**

Traditionally, the National Park Service has treated the topographic landscape features at Gettysburg as natural resources, even though these features were often critical to the movement of troops and the outcome of the battle. The park has allowed many of these features to become obscured over time. The emphasis of the park's resource management programs has also changed over time. From 1935 until about 1995, resource managers stressed the agricultural use of parkland and the adoption of the latest agricultural technology. Today, the emphasis is on the preservation, interpretation, and commemoration of the historic landscape of the battle.

In order to identify, understand, and preserve the character-defining features that contribute to the historic landscape, Gettysburg National Military Park has developed a general management plan that incorporates the first part of a cultural landscape report: site history, existing conditions, and analysis and evaluation. This approach proved useful in allowing park staff to identify those features that were most critical to protecting the integrity of the battlefield. It also aided staff in making management decisions and explaining those decisions to the public.

## **METHOD: INCORPORATING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS INTO THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **Identifying and Analyzing Cultural Landscape Features**

Although the topographic aspects of the landscape were the basis of military tactics employed by both sides in the battle, the National Park Service has traditionally focused on human-made features in its preservation efforts. As a result, significant landscape features—such as critical viewpoints or the pattern of open fields and woodlands that determined where armies moved—had become lost or obscured over time. These topographic features had been treated as natural rather than cultural resources, and their significance had not been identified or understood. This became an important issue when the National Park Service began the process of preparing a new general management plan (GMP) to replace the 1982 version. In preparing this revised plan, which was approved in 1999, park historians used park archival materials, library records, period photographs

and sketches, and maps to develop a history of the park and a set of historical base maps to document the landscape during different management eras. Map features included woodlots, thickets, orchards, open fields, fences, roads and lanes, railways, waterways, and the town of Gettysburg. These maps were digitized and then compared to 1993 aerial maps representing current conditions. In this way, it was possible to see the nature and extent of changes that have taken place on the battlefield and surrounding area over the past 135 years. In 1996, the park completed a cultural landscape inventory that quantified current conditions.

The next step, using the KOCO method taught by the U.S. Army, was to analyze which landscape features were critical to the outcome of the battle. KOCO stands for key terrain (K), observation points (O), cover and concealment (C), obstacles to the movement of troops (O), and avenues of approach (A). Once features were identified, historians determined what characteristics or qualities made them significant. For example, the open quality of a woodlot used as an approach avenue would be an important characteristic, while the size and boundary would be more important characteristics for a woodlot used for concealment.

### **Agricultural Use of Parkland**

Another important issue at the park has been agriculture. Since the National Park Service took over management in the 1930s, the emphasis has been on modern agricultural methods, at times compromising the integrity of natural and cultural features of the battlefield landscape for ease of farming and economic return. Historic lanes and fence lines, wetlands, orchards, and field boundaries were modified or eliminated to increase field size and allow access by large, modern, mechanized farm equipment. As proposed in the final 1999 GMP, the park will return to the historic agricultural field pattern that would have been present in 1863. In most cases, this will involve replacing fences between fields, but gaps in the fence may be left to allow for the passage of large, modern farm equipment.

### **Analysis of Cultural Landscape Features Aids in Decisionmaking**

The research, analysis, and synthesis process undertaken by park staff as part of the GMP has made decisionmaking regarding the landscape, and the integration of natural and cultural resources, much easier. In certain areas of the park where trees have encroached on the battlefield, the decision has been made to remove the trees and convert the land to an upland meadow. This provides habitat for several bird species of special concern in the state of Pennsylvania, and park natural resource staff are working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to improve these areas. In order to achieve complete historical accuracy, the cultural resource staff might have insisted on planting a crop grown in 1863 on this land, but were willing to compromise in favor of the birds. The cultural landscape analysis process had already determined that the important landscape features, in relation to the park's mission and goals, were the pattern of the agricultural fields, the size of

individual fields, and fences and lanes, rather than the type of crop grown. Different types of grasses could be planted in place of field crops as long as the significant landscape features were maintained.

The GMP analysis process has helped the park meet the challenging terms of an agreement with the Chesapeake Bay Program to protect water quality. (The Chesapeake Bay Program is a regional multi-state and agency partnership committed to protection and restoration of the bay.) As part of its compliance with this agreement, the park will leave 35-foot-wide woody vegetative buffer strips along streams. Although this amount of vegetation would not be historically accurate, historians have determined that this change will not alter the interpretation of the battle landscape in a significant way, as long as the vegetation is kept at a height that permits key views to be maintained. The park's agriculture program has ordered the removal of cattle from the stream corridor as part of the Chesapeake Bay Program agreement.

The restoration of orchards at the park has been an issue for at least ten years. In the past, park management decided to modernize the orchards rather than maintain their historic appearance. As part of the new GMP, the park is now planning to rehabilitate or restore about 160 acres of orchard. Park resource managers will be striving to create orchards with a historic appearance or character, rather than managing for fruit production, which will translate into using fewer chemical fertilizers and pesticides. How the historic appearance or character will be achieved is still being determined, but the park will work with the NPS Olmsted Center in Brookline, Massachusetts, to develop orchard treatment plans.

### **Public Involvement**

Park resource management staff suggest that developing and identifying the park's mission statement, goals, and legislated purpose as part of the 1993 GPRA have been beneficial to the public involvement process, and the inventory and analysis method used to evaluate the landscape has also been a valuable tool. When it came to some of the more difficult decisions for the GMP (such as the removal of trees), park staff were able to walk people through the logic at public meetings using maps, historic materials, the KOCO analysis, and the GIS analysis. People could examine the changes in specific features over time and understand resource managers' interest in adjusting the park's management direction. This allowed for informed, substantial concurrence on park decisions among the public and national nonprofit environmental organizations.